

Coronavirus

Variations of Grief and Healing

We will all experience some form of loss during the COVID-19 health crisis. Grief, or mourning a loss, is a natural response. Grief has variations that may affect our ability to heal and move forward with our lives. Grief, anticipatory grief, communal grief, and traumatic grief can all be triggered by these new experiences related to COVID-19 and significantly affect the healing process.

Grief: The natural response to a loss. Losses can include the loss of a loved one, job, physical ability, place, event and pet. Grief is the process of adapting to the effects of the loss and moving to a new normal. Allowing the process helps us heal.

Anticipatory Grief: The feelings and reactions one experiences before an anticipated loss. We are not sure how COVID-19 may affect us, but we know it will. We are experiencing losses now and are aware that more losses are probable. Building our resilience can help us heal from new losses.

Communal Grief: Our entire world has changed. Our systems that have operated for many years are being affected. Our families, friends and co-workers are all experiencing losses.

Traumatic Grief: Grief related to an unexpected loss that can trigger our flight/fight/freeze response like responses in traumatic events. Fear is common and it can be debilitating. Learning to live with fear can help with healing during a crisis.

The ongoing nature of the COVID-19 health crisis makes it difficult to grieve and heal. Our bodies can be in a constant state of physical and emotional response, with little time to relax and renew. It can also trigger feelings from past losses or traumatic events, leading to heightened fear and painful memories circling in one's brain. During an ongoing or extended period of crisis, it may be more helpful to focus on temporary coping strategies until the situation has stabilized. It may be easier to pursue therapeutic healing process at that time.

Ways to cope:

- Accept necessary behaviors like social distancing, staying at home, following medical advice
- Deal in facts not rumors
- Identify strengths and utilize them
- Maintain social connections
- Show compassion to self and others
- Expect ups and downs
- Identify thoughts and feelings, talk about them, write about them
- Eat well, get enough sleep, exercise, and make time to relax
- Seek professional help if needed

As always, your EAP is here for you and your family. Whether you are staying home or continuing your routine, there are a variety of ways to connect with your EAP including: telephone 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341, online at EAP4YOU.com, through video, live chat or text message. Reach out to learn more about the many ways you can receive support from your Employee Assistance Program.